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ABSTRACT

This document offers the point of view that Bruno Bettelheim's writings, based on Sigmund Freud's approach to education, suggest the most practical applications for achieving positive results within the classroom. The overall result of a student being taught all through school by the Freudian method would be an extremely positive one. Such a method would take an emotional and individualized approach, and be based on beliefs that learning disabilities of most students are linked to emotional problems, that children should be stimulated in their reading, that teachers influence students' lives, and that people seek pleasure and avoid pain. This method creates the most positive atmosphere within a classroom. From this positive atmosphere, positive effects are achieved in the subject matters of both the sciences and the arts. Creating a love of learning in the student develops the student in a well-rounded manner. The experiences and change of attitude that both a student and teacher gain represent the effectiveness of a Freudian approach to learning. The extensive successful work Bettelheim has done with emotionally deprived children proves the success of the approach. Only through this emotional involvement is meaningful advancement in children evident. Students, after learning to trust their teachers, begin to diminish the emotional blocks that impede their intellectual development. (RS)

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A FREUDIAN APPROACH TO EDUCATION

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The big question surrounding teaching is the question of the best teaching method. Because the power of education is in appealing to the student's emotions, I chose to focus on a Freudian approach to education, as seen in Bruno Bettelheim's writings. The approach taken by the teacher in the classroom either promotes or hinders the learning of his or her students within the classroom. Teachers in the classroom take on the role of surrogate parents while children are at school, and the student becomes dependant on the teacher because of the student teacher relationship. If the teacher chooses to work with this relationship, the rewards for both the student and teacher will far out weigh the extra work. This extra work is necessary for the teacher to build a positive and meaningful relationship with his or her students. This type of a relationship between students and their teacher is essential for a positive, meaningful and enjoyable learning experience within the classroom.

Learning Disabilities

The learning disabilities of most students are due to an emotional problem, and if these students can learn to trust their teacher the reason for the problem will often surface. A student will not open him/herself up to a teacher who they do not trust

or care about. Time and effort are needed in order for a teacher to be able to spot and work through the emotional problems of a student in his or her class, but if the teacher is successful the entire class will benefits. The few students with learning problems often disrupt the entire class. Often these problems can be eliminated with a little time, effort and perseverance. If a teacher is able to occupy the remainder of the class with work, he or she will be able to spend the necessary time to work with the few needy children. Once a child has experienced a hard uncaring teacher, the new caring teacher has to counteract the bad experience of the last teacher before the caring teacher and student can have a positive experience. The abundance of ineffective teachers in the classroom, who cannot be bothered to get to know and understand their students, give the warm caring teachers in the education field an uncaring reputation.

Creating a Love of Learning

The desire to learn must be present in a child before he or she will enjoy learning. The child must grow to want to read for him/herself, and not in order to satisfy others. In order for a child to experience the joy of learning, his or her teacher must create within the child's psyche the desire to learn. The teacher must teach the child that often the benefits from learning come later, rather than immediately (commonly known as

the reality principle). This is not an easy task for teachers, because children are used to and expect to see the rewards of their efforts immediately. In today's society children are not used to waiting for the reward and often become impatient. This is true especially of a child who comes from a home where his/her parents give him or her everything they desire with the exception of love. A child's biggest need and desire is to feel loved and important. Students resent feeling that they are in any way inferior, and resent being treated like they are merely a child. Students must be taught that just because the benefits from learning are delayed does not mean that they are nonexistent. Most students believe that if the results are not received immediately then their effort will go unrewarded. Often this type of attitude is formed at home, where if the parent does not immediately give the child recognition the recognition remains nonexistent.

The Reading Dilemma

An obstacle felt by many teachers who wish to make their students feel important and insightful are the look and say readers. The readers for students learning to read have transformed from interesting books into repetitive, boring, thoughtless readers, thus insulting the child's intelligence. The stories in these readers limit the child's vocabulary rather

than enlarge it while dealing with unrealistic subject matter. "Harper & Row's *Janet and Mark* series (formerly *Dick and Jane*) is probably among the most widely used today... [it uses] a meagre 182 words"(Bettelheim and Zelan, 24) in their first primer. This figure differs greatly form the estimate that "the number of words first graders know vary from 2,000 to 2,500"(Flesch, 103). According to these statistics a child enters grade one with a vocabulary of around 2,000 words, at least 1800 words more than he finds in the first primer, so why not use books that expand a child's vocabulary rather than stunt it? Many children if given the choice would rather read an unrealistic fairy tale of varied vocabulary that captures their interest, rather than read a boring simple unrealistic story from look and say. The many parents who feel that fairy tales are not substantial reading for their children are failing to see the important elements present in fairy tales. The heroes and heroines of fairy tales all overcome enormous obstacles in order to become successful, thus revealing the principle that if one perseveres he or she will gain success. If the school system wants to entice children to learn to read,

> [their] teaching methods should be in accordance with the richness of the child's spoken vocabulary, his intelligence, his natural curiosity, his eagerness to learn new things, his wish to develop his mind and his comprehension of the world, and his avid desire for stimulation of his imagination--in short, by making

> reading an activity of intrinsic interest.
> (Bettelheim & Zelan, 30)

A student would be much more willing to pick up a book and start reading it if they were interested in the story they were reading. This should not be surprising because adults often refuse to read anything they do not find thought provoking or interesting. If they read at all. There are a tremendous number of functional illiterate adults in our society and if we cannot build a desire in our children to read, this number will only remain increasing.

> If, rather than concentrating on developing reading skills, educational efforts from the very beginning were concentrated on developing the desire to become literate--essentially, and inner attitude to reading--then the final result might be that a much larger segment of the adult population would be literate.
> Bettelheim and Zelan, 21

A child is not going to have a desire to learn to read if his/her parents do not read. Often students in grade one have a predisposition to reading because, he or she associates reading with the affection he receives from his/her parent while sitting on his/her parent's knee or lying in bed listening to their parent read them a bedtime story. The practice of reading at home allow the parent and child to spend enjoyable time together, while building a child's vocabulary and imagination. Unfortunately, students will not express their feelings of hatred about the readers until they feel secure enough in their

relationship with their teacher. When teaching a child he or she should be taught that learning and reading are rewarding experiences that require a lot of effort. I also agree with Bruno Bettelheim and Karen Zelan who believe that the student's reading material should be appealing to the student.

> From the very beginning, the child must be convinced that mastering such skills is but a means to achieve a goal, and that the only thing of importance is that he should become literate--that is , come to enjoy literature and benefit from what it has to offer.
> Bettelheim and Zelan 6

Interesting and stimulating reading material for beginning readers is extremely important because, young students feel that they cannot tell their teacher that they hate the books they are reading. They feel that if they tell their teacher they hate the book they would be insulting or letting down their teacher. After all these students feel that their teacher has chosen the reader and as a result their teacher must have liked the reader.

The Importance of Care in the Classroom

In elementary school students need to feel important and that their opinion matters, otherwise their fear of speaking in class will remain for the rest of their school career. If a child with no self-confidence is allowed to repress his or her feelings of rejection, this fear will only grow causing the child more problems later in school. A teacher upon detecting that a child who is extremely shy and lacks self-confidence should work with

the student to build his or her confidence level. Often a student with potential, who is missed, quits school because quitting for him or her is better than living with the fear of rejection in school. For a child who comes from a home where there is no love and care school is a frightening experience. This experience although frightening has the potential of becoming an enjoyable and meaningful experience if the teacher reaches out to the student.

> as teachers, ... children's behaviour has to be understood before it is judged and attempts made to influence it, that the explanation of much of children's behaviour, of many of their difficulties and successes in learning, has to be sought in an inner world of phantasy and of feeling. Morris ,116

Once a caring teacher understands a student's problem he or she can often bring the timid unconfident student out of their shell. Once this occurs the entire class benefits from this students participation in class.

> The [teacher-student] relationship is based on love in the broadest sense of the word, which includes natural antagonism and aspects of anger when the relationship proves unrewarding. The children quickly realize they must earn the love, the praise and the rewards of the teacher. It is because of this desire of the child to be accepted, to be recognized, to be rewarded, to be marked as a good student that he is willing to work.
> Ekstein, 96

A child that comes from a home where materially everything is provided and emotionally nothing is provided, is often intimidated by the emotional bond that develops with his/her

teacher. This child must learn to let down the walls he or she has built around him or herself in order to keep others from hurting him or her. A child from this kind of a home is emotionally scarred, and has to learn from right the beginning what a positive meaningful relationship is all about. This child must learn what a relationship that includes respect and affection is like, as well as how to deal with this new developing relationship. Because this relationship requires active participation from both the student and the teacher, it does not develop without effort. Once the child has reached a positive relationship with his/her teacher, the teacher is able to build within the child the love of learning. Eventually, the child's "[m]otivation for reward, for love, [from the teacher] will be replaced by inner motivation, and the outer-directed child will have become an inner-directed one"(Ekstein, 96). The relationship between teacher and student is essential if the teacher is going to bring a child that is quite shy out of his or her shell. The most effective teacher would be the teacher who has an

> understanding of where a child or group of children may be at any given moment. Such a teacher is not committed to one specific tool of teaching but can shift these tools in accordance with the needs of the child. (Ekstein, 98)

This understanding allows the teacher to be able to adapt to the

needs of his/her students. This ability to adapt is essential in order for a classroom to run effectively and productively.

Favourite Teachers

I became rather interested in which teachers students felt they learned the most from and began asking this question to people I knew who had graduated from high school. I had known that the teachers I liked the most were the ones that I learned the most from, but I never dreamed that everyone I talked to would agree. I had always heard people say that the strict cold uncaring teachers received results in the classroom, but after talking to people I knew, I discovered that they did their work for these teachers half-heartedly and did not enjoy or learn the material. The conclusion I came to is that although these teachers received the work from the students, they did not receive positive results. Students always contrasted their experiences with cold uncaring teachers to their experiences with warm caring teachers who they enjoyed. Often the subject taught by a favourite teacher became the student's favourite subject. To many people this only makes sense, but for someone who has no self confidence, newly gained self-confidence goes a long way. Many people because of a positive relationship with a teacher have explored areas that otherwise would have been left unexplored.

> [T]he emphasis which analytic thought places on the child's inner development, his desires and phantasies. It is the analytic view that effective learning takes place only when the child's emotional energy can be directly engaged. Difficulties and failures in learning result from failure to engage him.
>
> Morris, 126

A student who hates sciences can gain a desire to understand why a certain subject fascinates his or her teacher so much, only to find that he or she has also become fascinated in the subject. This often happens in the sciences and the arts. One person I talked to switched from an Honors Science program into an Arts program. Upon reflection this person believed that the professors made all the difference, because he enjoyed the subject matter in both but found Arts more exciting because of the professors. This is not a rare discovery, rather I found it to be more common than I had first believed. Another person I talked to became interested in the sciences because of her high school Biology teacher, who made Biology interesting and exciting. She also informed me that the enthusiasm she gained for Biology in high school had not diminished, instead it grew now that she is in University.

The Potential for a Love

Freud believed that humans, especially children are highly irrational. Freud also believed that where the potential for love exists the potential for hate also exists. This is obvious,

because the people we love the most are also the people who's opinion we care the most about. Because we care about what our loved ones think, do and say they have the potential to hurt us the most. If you feel very strongly about someone, you are just as capable of loving them as you are of hating them. The people we love satisfy our passions, and cause us to act out of our passions (id), often luring us into making irrational decisions. Otherwise known as making decisions with your heart instead of your head. This potential for irrationality and our desire for pleasure exist from birth and are what Freud attributes the id. At birth we only have the capacity for the id, because when we are born we are pleasure seeking, pain avoiding beings acting primarily out of our ids. Once we grow we then become aware of our ego and superego. The ego is the manager of our mind, it balances the id and the superego and is the most rational of the three. The superego is the moral element of our mind. If we have any religious beliefs they are present in the superego. Even cartoons are Freudian. An example of a cartoon that represent Freud's three aspects of the mind is the cartoon short with Sylvester the cat. The short features Sylvester as the ego with the id shown as a devil on one shoulder and the superego on the other shoulder shown as the angel. The argument that takes place is representative of how

our id and superego are in conflict within our mind and how our ego balances the two and makes the decision. This constant struggle between the id and superego is characteristic of how the human mind works. A student upon entering school still requires development of their ego and superego in order to be able to make rational decisions.

This knowledge of how the mind works is beneficial for a teacher, because there are students who have no trace of superego, or their superego has taken over. Only through the gaining of knowledge can a person develop their ego, and therefore become more rational. "One primary motive for learning is the wish first to satisfy and later to modify an irrationally demanding superego to make it more reasonable"(Education and the Reality Principle 129). Once the student becomes more reasonable he or she will also become more rational, making balanced decisions from their ego. This development of the superego should be accompanied by fear.

> It is true that too much fear interferes with learning, but for a long time any learning that entails serious application does not proceed well unless also motivated by some manageable fear. Bettelheim 130

This development of the student's superego accompanied by the discipline used in the classroom will result in more rational decisions being made by the student.

Freud believed that most of man's problems were caused by

the mind. He also believed that by increasing our knowledge we increase the possibilities for a genuine relationship with another person. When a student looks to his or her teacher for acknowledgement and affirmation, he or she will continue to look for this type of a relationship with other teachers. Therefore, if a student has a positive relationship with his or her teacher that is based on developing the rational side of the student, the student will have long term benefits.

If a teacher in the classroom is able to appeal to the passions of his or her students, they will be more receptive to learning the subject matter. A charismatic teacher can make even Chemistry enjoyable for students who hate sciences. The approach taken when teaching students and is the key factor.

> Attitudes to a subject can often be seen to be loaded with feelings which may have little to do with the subject as such, but much perhaps to do with the personality of the person who teaches it ...
> Morris, 128

Too many ineffective teachers exist in the schools today, thus increasing the number of students who detest school. All it takes is for one teacher to turn a student at the crucial age of 16 against school. If a student has a teacher who destroys his/her self-confidence when the student is aware that he or she can quit school, often they do just that. A student who has lost all of his/her confidence as the result of an ineffective

teacher, often never realizes that the teacher was ineffective. This student may never get over the feeling that he or she is a failure and may have thrown away their opportunity for post secondary education. The ineffective teacher often goes undetected and the student becomes labelled as a quitter; a label that in some cases should apply to the teacher rather than the student. If this student's potential was crushed because of a teacher that abused his/her power to manipulate the emotions of the student, then it truly is a tragedy.

Unfortunately, when looking at a Freudian approach to teaching there is always the possibility that a teacher will abuse the system, but I believe that the possibility exists in every method of teaching. Freudian thought does promote manipulation of the young student in order to lead them in the right direction, but the long term benefits counteract this manipulation. Is not manipulation present in other methods of teaching? After all is not stunting a child's vocabulary as in the case of the look and say readers also manipulation? The manipulation present in Freud, develops the reality principle while developing the ego and superego. This manipulation is necessary in order to bring to the student the love of learning and the knowledge necessary for making rational decisions. Because people are irrational by nature, they need the guidance

that the Freudian approach gives. If a classroom is filled with a positive and caring atmosphere, everyone in the class will benefit from the experience.

Another issue that I agree with is Bettelheim's stand on "punishment versus discipline". A problem faced by teachers and parents is the conflict of how to show the child love without spoiling, and how to discipline the child without scaring him/her too much. Bettelheim's description that punishment "sets us against the person who inflicts it on us"(Atlantic Monthly, 51). This description is meaningful to anyone who has received punishment. Bettelheim then goes on to explain the effects punishment has on the punished person.

> When we experience painful or degrading punishment, most of us learn to avoid situations that lead to it; in this respect punishment is effective. However, punishment teaches foremost the desirability of not getting caught, so the child who before punishment was open in his actions now learns to hide them and becomes devious.(Atlantic Monthly, 52)

Bettelheim believes that it is better to tell both child and student exactly how you feel, rather than simply punishing him or her.

> When we tell a child [student] that we disapprove of what he has done, but are convinced that his intentions were good, our positive approach will make it relatively easy for him to listen to us and not close his mind in defence against what we have to say.
> (Atlantic Monthly, 52)

This method of handling the situation will have positive results for both the child or student as well as for the parent or teacher.

> The fundamental issue is not punishment at all but the development of morality--that is, the creation of conditions that not only allow but strongly induce a child to wish to be a moral, disciplined person.
> Bettelheim, 52 Atlantic Monthly

A relationship that is built on honesty is one with unlimited potential, whereas a relationship in which the two parties do not tell each other exactly how they feel has limited potential for growth. The teacher and parent should represent the voice of reason that leads the child and student to an understanding of what they have done and why what they have done is wrong. An interesting concept that Bettelheim addresses is the question of what is more effective the use of guilt or the use of punishment.

> Isn't guilt--the pangs of conscience--a much better and more lasting deterrent than the fear of punishment Acting in line with one's conscience surely, asks for a more responsible and sturdy personality than acting out of fear.(Atlantic Monthly, 53)

Guilt obviously in the end will be more effective, because the guilty person will change their behaviour for themselves rather than because of punishment. The only caution that should be used when administering guilt is that the penalty fits the act. It would be completely unfair to administer unnecessary guilt, after all, children and students are people, and people make mistakes.

If a teacher or parent punishes or disciplines too harshly they may push the child into regression and create a resentful child. Resentment and regression will only undermine the relationship between the teacher and student or the parent and child, leaving them with more problems than they had before the incident. A child usually remembers the punishment but not the incident, whereas if they were reasoned with and were made felt guilty usually a change in attitude is noted in retrospect to the incident. The child will remember the incident where reasoning occurred, before he or she will remember the pain of the punishment.

Parents and teachers who lack discipline often have children and students who lack discipline. The most effective way of having well disciplined students and children is for the teacher and parents to "practice what they preach".

> Our children form themselves in reaction to us; the more they love us, the more they emulate us, and the more the respond positively to our consciously held values and to those of which we are not conscious but which also influence our actions. The less they like and admire us, the more negatively they respond to us in forming their personalities. (Atlantic Monthly, 57)

What the children and students see in the home and in the classroom, has a more dramatic impact on their actions than what the teacher or parent tells them. Although this does not hold true all of the time, it does hold true the majority of the time.

Most of the students who rebel either lack discipline at home or at school. These are children who consistently push the boundaries with no reprimand or acknowledgment. This strive for acknowledgement or reprimand then becomes a game in which the student or child becomes very involved. This game becomes so intense that the child or student can often see no way out.

Teacher-Student Relationships

I also asked people what qualities they felt were the most important in a teacher and number one was that a teacher should be caring. Bettelheim offers a child centered approach that demands that the teacher care about and for his or her students. No other approach delves into the emotional side of the child the way Freud does. Bettelheim, a Freudian, offers ideas and methods that are not impossible, but do require a great deal of work and effort. An effective teacher is one that wants what is best for his/her students, and Bettelheim's approach is one that centers on individual problems and how to deal with the problems. The teacher when stepping into a classroom has the ability to manipulate all of his students, and I only hope that the learning and growth in the classroom are of a positive nature.

A successful classroom and teacher are represented in the relationship the students have to their teacher. This bond should be a caring emotional one that stimulates both growth and

learning. Students will often do their homework and learn the subject matter just so that they do not let their teacher down, thus showing the success of the bond between students and teacher. Once the teacher shows his/her students that he/she cares his/her students will go to all ends of the earth to show his/her teacher that he/she also cares. Meaningful interesting discussions will fill the class, because students will feel that the teacher cares about what they have to say. The teacher takes on the role of surrogate parent upon entering the classroom and should take on the responsibilities of this role when entering his/her classroom. An effective teacher will receive his/her rewards through the achievement and development of his/her students.

The Love of Learning

In my opinion, Bettelheim and Freud have the most practical applications for positive results within the classroom. The overall result of a student being taught all through school by the Freudian method would be an extremely positive one. This method creates the most positive atmosphere within a classroom. From this positive atmosphere within the classroom, positive effects are achieved in the subject matter of both the sciences as well as the arts. Creating the love of learning in the students, develops the student in a well rounded manner.

The experience and change of attitude that both a student and teacher gain, represent the effectiveness of a Freudian approach to teaching. After this experience, students enter their next phase of education with a love for learning. Also the extensive successful work Bettelheim has done with emotionally deprived children proves the success of a Freudian approach to teaching. Only through this emotional involvement, is meaningful advancement in children evident. Students after learning to trust their teachers begin to diminish the emotional blocks that impede their intellectual development.

The Freudian approach of teaching in the classroom is indisputable, as is most of Freud's teachings. If you believe that humans are emotional, he is right! If you believe that parents affect their child's emotional development, he is right! If you believe that teachers influence student's lives, he is right! If you believe that children should be stimulated in their reading, he is right! If you believe that we are pleasure seeking, pain avoiding individuals, he is right! If you believe learning disabilities are linked to emotional problems, he is right! Freud, although controversial offers the best explanation for why humans are the way they are. After all, who can realistically deny that once a student has learned to love learning that education has been effective. This approach is the

most emotional and individualized approach, while not losing the importance of the entire class. There is no other approach that can successfully achieve this harmony the way the Freudian approach does.

The only question I am left with is why when a method that is so effective exists, why is it not implemented in schools. The answer, because Bureaucrats with no sense of emotion determine the methods that are taught in our schools. The more emotionally dead society is the more the government can take advantage of it. Freud, although controversial still maintains the inside track into understanding the inner workings of human minds and souls. It is just too bad that too many people cannot get past the sexual element present in his teachings. I believe that the reason people hate Freud is because they are afraid of what he might tell them about themselves. After all, there is nothing more scary than your true uncovered self.

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